



# RCMA HOY

A Special Tribute to Mr. Wendell N. Rollason, 1916 - 1997

We Can Make A World of Difference

## Helping Our Youth



FEBRUARY 1997 Issue 47 OUR MISSION: Helping Parents Restart, Giving Kids a Head Start, Helping Staff Develop

### A loving tribute to Mr. Wendell N. Rollason, an extraordinary man — August 21, 1916 to January 18, 1997

I started with RCMA 18 years ago as a teacher trainee at Farmworker Village B in Immokalee.

Mr. Rollason encouraged me to go for my GED. I never forget his words telling me "you can do it."

Because he believed in me, I started to believe in myself. Because of his help and encouragement, I learned I could do many things that I used to be afraid to do.

There will never be another man like Mr. Rollason. He is a true leader and I'm going to miss him dearly.

— Irma Chappa

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I will never forget a staff meeting Mr. Rollason held at the first center I worked, where I was the education coordinator. The staff at this new center could not cooperate with each other.

There was jealousy, too much competitiveness, and absolutely no harmony. On the phone, Mr. Rollason and I discussed the problems. He told me to call a mandatory staff meeting after work that day.

He talked to the staff and then he said, "We must love one another and treat each other the way we want to be treated."

Of course, I had heard that many times as a child, but we were all listening carefully to his words and what they meant as new staff at a new RCMA center.

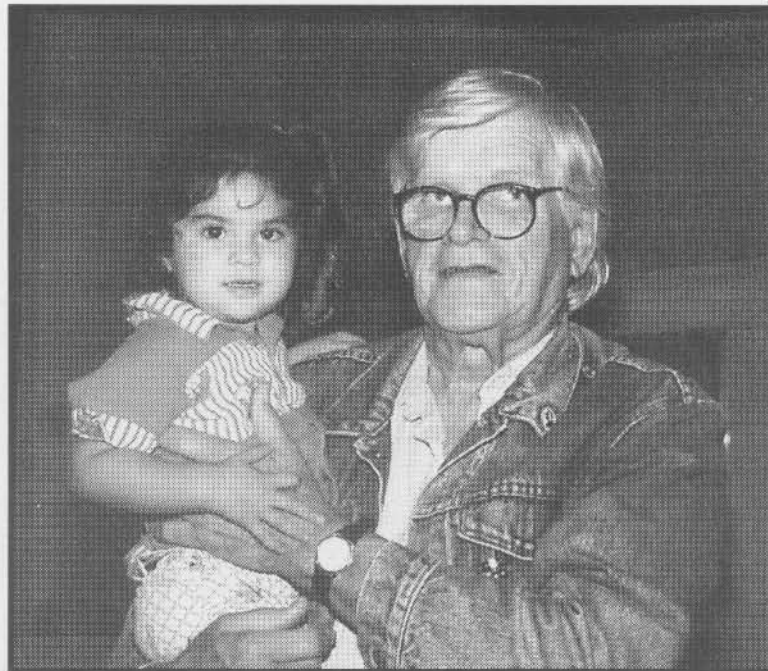
— Judy Burleson

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Mr. Rollason was the most kind hearted person in the world. He cared for all the people no matter what race or color. He was fair to everybody. He was a great advocate to all migrant people and

*Because he believed in me, I started to believe in myself. Because of his help and encouragement, I learned I could do many things that I used to be afraid to do.*

— Irma Chappa



Mr. Wendell Rollason, holding the future in his hands

he fought for their rights and beliefs. He will sadly be missed by many people. He was a great leader.

— Juanita Garcia

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Mr. Rollason was that book that you could not judge by its cover. You had to read its contents because from inside came this warm, loving and caring person. This was shown through his concern for those

who were less fortunate.

His shoes will be hard to fill as he was a unique individual.

— Edna Blue

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Mr Rollason was a man of few words. He would walk through the office with his briefcase in hand. He was usually set out on a task and was determined to complete it. When I asked him a question, he would stop, look at me, and then try to answer my question completely so that I understood.

I loved when Teresa [Tremelling], his assistant, was out of the office and I would get the chance to type something for him. His letters were so interesting. It was like listening to a conversation. I've never known a person to write letters like he did. I felt important when I was through with his typing. This man truly cared for all human beings.

— Judy Brill

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*From fighting for equal rights of black Americans and farm workers to serving in jail in Mexico for his beliefs, this was more than an ordinary man. He is an inspiration to me! Never would he simply take the easy way out; he would hold on to his convictions and fight for what he believed as honorable and moral.*

*As long as we continue to move forward with Mr. Rollason's vision and work, and for as long as a smile can be brought to the face of our children, Mr. Rollason will remain alive as part of our lives.*

— Carla Clayton

**The Man**

Four score years ago there was born on this find land,  
A kind and gentle person, who is fondly called "The Man."  
As he walks down life's pathway he stands free, tall and proud  
For on his head his hair is worn like a white fluffy cloud.  
He's a well respected and much admired man,  
Always there to guide us with his firm but gentle hand.

Though your jacket may be made of denim,  
Your heart is full of love for your fellow man.

For thirteen years I have followed you,  
As you left your boot prints in the sand.  
Now we wish you a Happy 80th Birthday,  
For to us you are "The Man."

— Teresa Tremelling

*I know when he reached them pearly gates St. Peter said, "Go on in Wendell, you earned your way in a long time ago."*

— Phyllis Reitenour

I remember thinking what pretty white hair he had. . . He accomplished so much to help migrant workers who needed someone to come to their rescue. I can only say I am very proud to be working for a company he founded.

— Phyllis Reitenour  
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Mr. Rollason had some simple, yet powerful, messages for us about being involved in children's lives and helping people be in control of their own lives.

Long-time employees often say "What I learned working with Mr. Rollason is . . ." and share his message.

What fills me with hope and confidence is when newer employees or parents say "What I have learned from the people at RCMA is . . ." and they share one of Mr. Rollason's messages.

He brought us understanding and clarity; we continue to share that understanding, clarity and love with others.

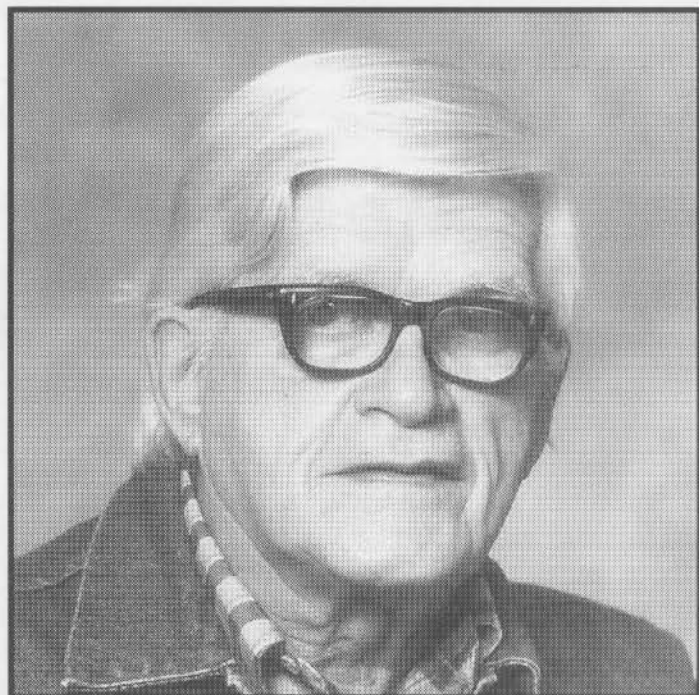
— Mike Clark  
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Mr. Rollason helped migrant families get a head start in life.

When I was growing up my parents were migrant workers. . . I never had a chance to stay in school and learn. I got married. Both me and my husband were migrant workers and RCMA provided us with day care for our first child since she was six weeks old, which gave us an opportunity to work daily. This child is now 21 years old and is attending St. Leo College. She

*If I could physically see the word LOVE it would be WENDELL ROLLASON. I am a better parent and role model. My children will be able to reach for a star and pull one down*

— Alicia Coronado



is in her third year studying accounting.

I am now employed by RCMA and no longer have to go out to the fields in the hot sun. I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Rollason for giving my family the opportunity to get ahead in life.

— Benita Abrigo  
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A very sensitive, simple, intelligent person with a strong commitment to migrant families and children's education.

— Margarita Hinojosa

Mr. Rollason has won the admiration of so many important people with his wisdom and understanding for the need of many families.

Mr. Rollason has gone, but his spirit will live in each child that RCMA serves, and his presence will be felt in everything we do for the good of the farmworkers and the children.

Mr. Rollason, you will live forever in our hearts.

— Awilda Llopiz  
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The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. I hope the works he did will forever prosper and we love him but God loves him best. . . .

— Retha M. Woolfolk

# Wendell N. Rollason, in the words of friends throughout Florida, was . . .

*He epitomized my concept of a Christian and, with my father, guided the development of my social conscience.*

—Medora Alleman, Homestead

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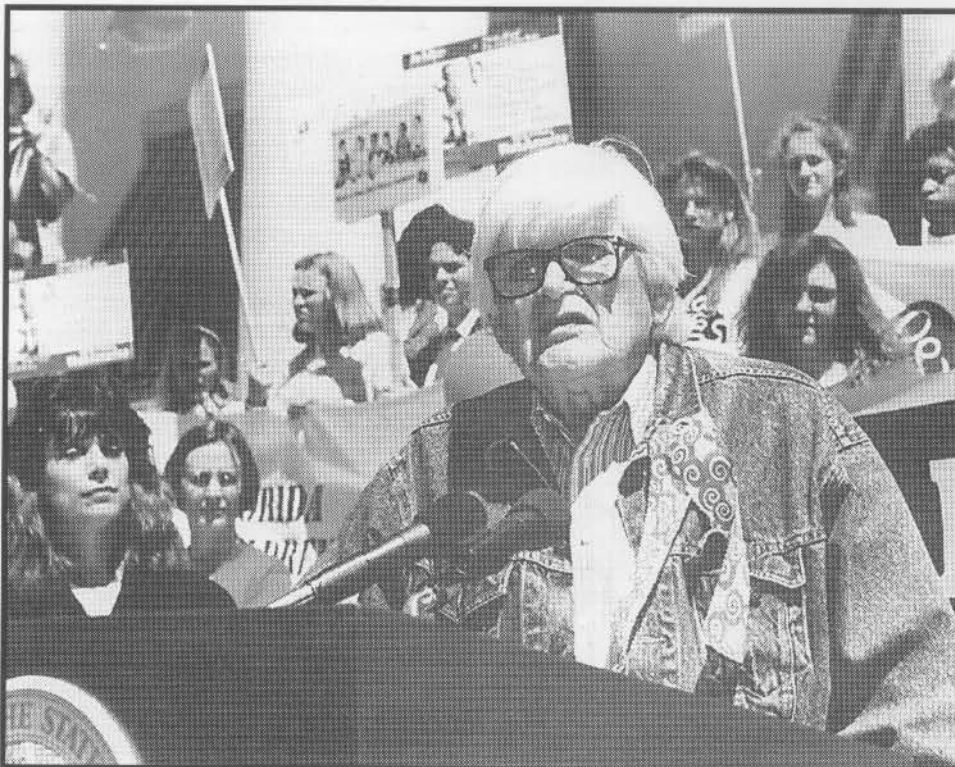
El ha partido hacia la eternidad pero con la satisfaccion de haber recogido su cosecha, sembro amore, carino, comprension, y volco todo lo bueno que almacenaba en su corazon . . . El esta con nosotros. Lo podemos ver a diario en la mirada, en la sonrisa, en el llanto y en la alegria que expresa cada nino en los RCMA.

— Brunilda Guevara, Delray Beach



*While we meet many good people in life's journey, only a few stand out as truly embodying what we all should strive to be . . . true leaders and role models. Wendell was such a man.*

— Ted Granger



Wendell Rollason was one of Florida's most articulate, passionate, and persuasive advocates for children, families, and the social justice they deserve . . .

Wendell rarely wasted words. Quality, not quantity, was the measure of his pronouncements.

In Rollason's acceptance remarks for the "Sharon Solomon Child Advocate of Valor Award" in 1987 from the Florida Center for Children & Youth, Wendell deflected the focus from himself and gave credit for most of his achievements to his wife and Redlands colleague, Barbara Mainster, their committed staff, and most of all, to the families who toil in the fields to feed us.

— Jack Levine, Tallahassee

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*We behold the Christian spirit in Wendell — a man who lived his highest good, who walked the talk, a beckon to others, an angel among us.*

— Mini Graham and Alan Stonecipher, Tallahassee



I always admired his commitment and dedication to those less fortunate and this labor of love was his passion. His commitment to help others was genuine and accomplished with little fanfare and with so much class.

— Manny Buigas, Miami  
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It is not very often that one spends time in the presence of a man who lived his life in the service of others, yet recognized everyone as children of God. Everyone was truly special to him.

— Donna Marie Goray, Delray Beach  
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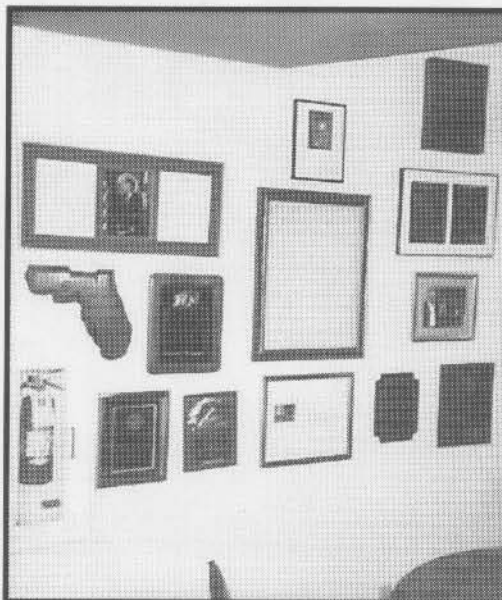
We [Junior League of Boca Raton] offer the thought that there is a strong ray of hope from Mr. Rollason's life. So many children's lives will continue to be greatly enhanced from his creation of RCMA. The children will grow to be our leaders, our teachers, our future. There is no greater legacy, no greater gift.

— Ellen Malone, Boca Raton  
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I particular remember two occasions in which I saw Mr. Rollason in Tallahassee . . . The second time I saw him was about fours years ago in the airport.

I told him about my "new" job (before I was working with RCMA). He asked me about my life and the working conditions in the Capital City.

He also asked me "Are you happy?" I did not respond because I was flabbergasted by the question. I talked about "things." He asked me about one of the most important issues in life:



happiness. . . He said that he was proud of the fact that I came from Redlands to work for the State.

— Awilda Zeruto, Tallahassee  
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Whenever I met with Wendell, I sensed his deep moorings in love and God, and surely you [Barbara] were the anchor. . . I know that he continues to intercede with God for his beloved . . . Now he is able to do this face to face.

— Jim Towey, Tallahassee  
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He was a genuinely outstanding individual who had the interest of others at heart as evidenced through his founding of Redlands Christian Migrant Association, his work on my Advisory Council on Farmworker Affairs and his involvement with children's issues. His long-term service to his community was exceptional.

— Lawton Chiles, Governor  
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Wendell Rollason was an inspiration and model for so many of us involved in the migrant movement in Dade County in the 70's and 80's.

For me, he was a truly unselfish human being intent on alleviating some of the injustices in our society. He opened my eyes to "another America" hidden away on the other side of the highway. And he taught me how to work with and encourage people to help themselves.

— Charlene Esserman, Miami

**THE ROLLASON CENTER,** RCMA's administrative and support services building in Immokalee, was so dedicated in Mr. Rollason's honor by the Board of Directors on November 2, 1996.

The plaques, awards and letters—celebrating what Mr. Rollason meant to so many people—are located on two walls in the lobby area of The Rollason Center. These honors span four decades. When you visit, please take some time to read them.

# Wendell Rollason — Heroe Verdadero

Sin vacilar y poniendo de testigo a nuestro Dios puedo decirlo con mucho orgullo que el lider Wendell Rollason no ha muerto para todo aquel que lo conocio y compartio con el algun momento de su vida.

El vive y vivira para siempre en nuestros corazones como un gran ejemplo, el cual fue su sueño que con gran empeno y amor pudo lograr.

— Angie y Raymundo Herrera  
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Un hombre que tenia un corazon y un deseo de ayudar a los padres necesitados con el deseo de trabajar. Que Dios lo tenga en su santa Gloria por su gran corazon.

— Camerina Bernal  
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Para mi fue un gran hombre de muy grande corazon, que hizo mucho por la humanidad y quiso mucho a los ninos.

— Raquel Gamez  
\*\*

Yo pude ver en el que fue un hombre ejemplar para nosotros, al brindar cuidado por ninos que sufrían en la labor. Su memoria sera un ejemplo para que veamos siempre a los ninos con amor.

— Virginia  
\*\*

Observe que el no era una persona que le importase si alguien era rico, pobre, negro o blanco. Para el todas las personas eran iguales, seres humanos con un gran corazon como el del Sr. Rollason.

— Luz M. Vasquez  
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El Senor Rollason fue una persona ejemplar y bondadosa que me hizo pensar en lo importante que es que los padres se envuelvan en la educacion de sus hijos.

— anonima  
\*\*

Nos enseno a abogar por los derechos de nuestros ninos y sus familias.

Fue una persona que nos enseno a convivir con la gente sin importar el color o la raza.

Con la filosofia de RCMA nos dio la oportunidad a muchas personas de salir del campo y desarrollarnos como profesionales.

Estoy segura que la lista podria ser interminable. Fue una persona a quien admirar por siempre, que inspira a seguir su ejemplo.

— Marbelia Zamarripas  
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... Fui conociendo al Sr. Rollason y comprendi su gran valor, mas aun entiendo la responsabilidad de continuar con su gran labor. ...

— Mildred Medina



***Parents must be brought into the education process for them and their children to gain and sustain hope for the future. Poor children must be encouraged to enjoy school, encouraged to study, be provided with homework help, encouraged to achieve, encouraged to dream, encouraged to become educated.***

***These kids are as bright as yours and mine. But they need society's steady and dependable support. And this they are not getting.***

— Wendell Rollason, January 26, 1995

Para mi Mr. Rollason fue un heroe. Siempre lo recordare, vivo en mi mente y en mi corazon, siempre admire sus metas, su empeno, su vocacion y su dedicacion para con los demas.

Rey del pueblo.

Orgullosa de su obra.

Lleno de amor por los demas.

Atento a las necesidades del Pobre.

Siempre alerta a la educacion de jovenes.

Ofrecio su apoyo al necesitado.

Nunca descanso, hasta el Final de su carrera.

El es mi heroe.

— Guadalupe Razo

To me, Mr. Rollason was a man of courage to take the stand he did for children and families. ...

— Marjorie Thomas  
\*\*

The staff at Indian River Migrant Head Start believe in Wendell Rollason's vision of enabling farmworker children to have the same opportunities in life that other Florida children enjoy. We are proud to be a small part of that vision.  
— Indian River MHS staff

Mr. Rollason:

You have been our sunshine  
You are the light of our past and future  
You have been an inspiration in many lives.

The seed that you planted in  
Homestead has flourished throughout  
the state of Florida.

Thank you for opening a path of love,  
caring and opportunities to all families,  
staff, and especially our children.

— Homestead Area staff

In my last "Notes to Keep You [Mr. Rollason] Informed!" I write: "I've missed you greatly. You have been a pillar in my life for a long time. Sitting in our office alone has made me think of RCMA memories I've shared with you.

Remember all those long nights putting proposals together before technology invaded RCMA? How about the time I punched holes on the wrong side of the Florida/RCMA maps that you spent hours preparing!

Those times you needed me and I was busy "feeding" Aaron or Craig! And, oh, those Board meetings of long ago when we'd get home at 2:00 a.m.!

These were all very special and memorable times for me. Of course, there are many, many more. You have taught me so much. I am truly grateful. I'm a better person having known you.

I want you to know that I deeply care about you, greatly respect you, and will truly miss you.

I love you, Sir.

— Teresa Tremelling

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... I sometimes would see him walk in and he would always say to me "Good morning" with a smile on his face. Although I never really had a chance to get to know him like so many other people did, I feel that I was left out of something good.

— Melina Olvera

Mr. Rollason was the guiding light, the spiritual leader, of RCMA. He provided us with an unwavering sense of direction; he constantly reminded us what our mission is.

The image of Mr. Rollason pounding the table during a meeting to emphasize keeping our focus on the children we serve is one that shall ever remain with me.

Those of us who have had the opportunity to know Mr. Rollason will never be able to forget the reason that we are here at RCMA.

— Ira Malamut



**BUILDING RCMA TOGETHER:  
Mr. Rollason with his wife  
Barbara Mainster at his side.**

He made a difference in my life.

He traveled from horizon to horizon for a mission.

He taught me to challenge the school system, and to know my rights as a parent.

He had a great Leadership style.

He was a teacher. I learned from him.

He wore many hats to help the children and staff.

He was my mentor.

And he was my friend...

— Velma Adame

He knew the parents worked very hard and anything he could do to make life easier, he tried. He never tried to be something he wasn't, never tried to impress people by wearing something fancy. I'll always remember his blue jean jacket - even at formal meetings. Mr. Rollason will be greatly missed.

— Mascotte Migrant Head Start Staff

**Wendell N. Rollason is gone,  
but his spirit is not. What each  
of us learned from him and what  
we do with that influence will  
keep his spirit alive. . . .**

**We have so much important  
work to do for the children and  
families who need our services  
and our advocacy. Let our deeds  
be our way to continue to honor  
this man whom we dearly love.  
This is what he wanted.**

— Barbara Mainster

Wonderful Respected  
Extraordinary Optimistic  
Notable Lobbyist  
Determined Life-like  
Eager Aggressive  
Legend Steadfast  
Legacy Overwhelming  
Novelty

These 15 words describe how I feel about Mr. Rollason. . . .

I remember when I first met him and the usual sound his boots made when he crossed the room. As time went by I got used to hearing that particular sound. I eagerly await the time when I can hear that sound again someday real soon. That is one of the many things I remember about him, gone but not forgotten.

— Nancy McDonald

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day, any problem  
When you need  
someone  
to talk to,  
EAR is there.  
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